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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 006448

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/16/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: PM MALIKI IN TURKEY: PLEDGES OF SUPPORT, BUT
LITTLE TANGIBLE PROGRESS

REF: ANKARA 6372

Classified By: DCM Nancy McEldowney for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Iraqi PM Maliki accepted Turkish offers to increase the level of training for ISF, especially police, and to work on expanding Turkish trade and investment beyond northern Iraq during his Nov. 16-17 visit to Ankara. The GOT was generally pleased with Maliki's public statements on the PKK, but still impatient for concrete steps by the GOI. Maliki reportedly was vague on the Kirkuk issue but MFA is convinced he will seek to delay the 2007 referendum. The Iraqi PM asserted that the ISF would eventually contain sectarian violence. The two sides made no progress on additional border gates. The Turkish MFA informally floated the idea of an enlarged neighbors meeting which would include the U.S. as well as Syria and Iran. End summary.

¶2. (C) DCM called on GOT Special Envoy for Iraq Celikkol for a readout of Iraqi PM Maliki's Nov. 16-17 visit to Turkey. Maliki and Turkish PM Erdogan had a one-on-one meeting and a working lunch with the delegations. Celikkol reported that Maliki did not seem overly concerned by sectarian violence or the militia issue. On the contrary, the Iraqi PM was optimistic that ISF will gain control of the country, creating a better atmosphere for economic development. Maliki tended to blame former regime elements more than sectarian militias for the current violence. He accepted Turkey's offer to train ISF -- especially police -- in Turkey and said he would discuss the matter with his interior and defense ministers upon returning to Baghdad. Celikkol observed that there was lack of trust among Maliki and the numerous GOI ministers who accompanied him.

¶3. (C) Celikkol said he did not have a readout of the Erdogan-Maliki one-on-one bilateral, but told us that this was to be Erdogan's opportunity to send Maliki a strong message on the Kirkuk and PKK issues. In their larger meeting, Erdogan was determined to offer Maliki any assistance Iraq needed and demonstrate support for the GOI. In addition to training for ISF, Maliki replied that he wanted further private Turkish investment in all of Iraq, not just the north. To this end, the leaders agreed to support a "large meeting of businessmen and bureaucrats" in Istanbul as soon as next month. MFA will work with the Turkish Union of

Chambers and Commodity Exchanges (TOBB) to organize this gathering.

¶4. (C) On Kirkuk, Maliki in larger meetings and with the Turkish press was cautious, emphasizing only that the issue will be solved through the Iraqi constitution. However, Celikkol said he is persuaded by talking with Maliki's close aides that the PM wants to delay the Kirkuk referendum beyond 2007 in an attempt to calm tensions. Celikkol said Maliki sent positive messages to the Turkish press on PKK, but the GOT is waiting for actual results. Celikkol believed Maliki came away from Ankara with a fuller understanding on Turkish concerns on these issues.

¶5. (C) Celikkol reported that Turkey and Iraq reached no agreement -- nor even made progress -- on the issue of opening additional border gates between the two countries. It was a "dialogue of the deaf," he asserted. He claimed that the Iraqis are anxious only to open gates, but are not considering the additional road networks these gates would necessitate. Turkey has even offered to build additional roads within Iraq to make a package deal of one gate near Habur and one near the preferred Turkish location, Ovakoy, feasible. But apparently the two sides are still far apart.

¶6. (C) Celikkol accused FonMin Zebari, who accompanied Maliki, of attempting to sabotage the "Neighbors of Iraq" process by insisting on holding the next fonmin meeting in Baghdad. Given the security situation, Celikkol was sure that at least two Gulf State neighbors would refuse to attend, thus delaying the meeting indefinitely. Turkey is trying to persuade Zebari to agree to hold the next such

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meeting in Egypt, who is next in the rotation to host.

¶7. (C) Celikkol asked if we were indeed going to consult Iran and Syria on Iraq. DCM replied that we have not yet decided on how this might work. Celikkol floated the idea of a larger "neighbors" format meeting (to include Iran and Syria) in which the U.S., UN, and other players might participate. He plans to travel in the region to discuss Iraq issues, and asked to consult with us in particular before he travels to Iran and Syria.

¶8. (C) Celikkol reported that Iraqi State Minister Waili did accompany Maliki to Ankara, and that he met with GOT Special Envoy Baser and TNIO Director Taner. We will report on Waili's program septel.

¶9. (C) Comment: The Maliki visit, once-postponed and subsequently nearly canceled (ref), did not appear to produce any breakthroughs, but it has apparently kept Turkey-Iraq relations on their tentative course. We have heard promises of significant Turkish training for ISF and increased trade and investment before, however, and we are not sure that this visit will be the one to put these over the top. End comment.

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